MODERN CHRISTIANITY.

A Dialogue Between a Baptist and an Infidel.

"Fear God, and Give Glory to Him, for the hour of His Judgment is come."—Rev., 14:6, 7.

A Baptist, who was intently perusing a newspaper, and who appeared deeply concerned at the havoc made by the cholera in its career of desolation, remarked:

"The progress of the cholera is alarming—is it not?"

INFIDEL. It is truly so.

BAPTIST. It ought, I think, to awaken among pious people the most lively concern for perishing souls.

I. I presume, sir, you are a christian?

B. I am, sir, of the denomination called Baptists. It becomes me, as I said, to be concerned for souls. May I hope that in such fearful times you are duly impressed with the obligations of religion?

I. I confess at once I am not; and although it may be painful for you to hear, I have to say that I am entirely infidel as to the religion exhibited to the world by the numerous sects.

B. Oh! sir, I am truly distressed for your soul. I should like to hear your objections to our glorious christianity, culminating as it is in its meridian light. Perhaps I can remove the basis upon which you build your objections.

I. Being so freely and kindly invited, I will do so without further preface. You were speaking of fearful cholera. I think there is a foolish writer in your Bible named James, who had some concern for bodies as well as souls; and if I recollect right, he says something about sick people sending for elders to anoint with oil.

B. Yes; St. James, one of the holy apostles of our Lord, does say, "If any are sick, let them send for the elders of the church, and let them pray, anointing them with oil, and the prayer of faith shall heal the sick." A glorious epistle is that of James, sir. [James, 5 14.]

I. Does your minister teach, or do his followers practice this foolish command?

B. Oh, no, sir. That ordinance of healing and anointing with oil is done away!

I. By what authority?

B. I confess, sir, I cannot tell.

I. I will inform you thereon. Your minister, with all other ministers and pious people, are too wise and infidel, like me, to follow such a foolish teacher as "holy" St. James. As your ministers reject one part of the epistle, I reject the whole; thus we are both infidel in kind. I do not practice, because I do not believe. You say you believe, but do not practice. Of us two, you are the

worst infidel, if there is bad and worse in the case.

B. Sir, I am obliged to confess that your conclusion is startling and resistless. I wish I could overturn it, but, alas! I am unable. I tremble at being an infidel. Proceed, however, with your objections.

I. I think you stated you were a Baptist?

B. Yes, sir.

I. I have a difficulty in regard to baptism, upon which I would like to hear your explanation.

B. You shall have it very freely. I hope, however, it may be more satisfactory than the last.

I. An old foolish fisherman, Peter, I think he was called, told some silly people to be baptized *for remission of sins*, and thousands, I think, were fools enough to go and do as he told them.

B. Just so. Oh! it was a glorious sight!

I. Does your minister teach people to be baptized for remission of sins? [Mark, 1 4.]

B. No, sir. [Acts, 2: 38; 22: 16.]

I. Have you been baptized for remission?

B. No, sir; it is done away.

I. Exactly so. You are all too wise and infidel to obey such a foolish and ignorant man as Peter. I conclude as before: here we are infidels again, and you the worst! Bravo, infidelity. All the parsons, preachers, and pious people infidels, rejecting James and Peter.

B. Sir, you make me feel alarmed for my religion; however, I will, if you please, hear all your objections.

I. Jesus Christ, I think, somewhere says to his apostles, etc.: Go forth without purse and scrip; the servant shall be like his Lord. And Paul says to Timothy: Having food and raiment, be content. Infidel as I am, I admire such disinterestedness; but, sir, does your eloquent minister obey these directions?

B. Alas! no, sir. We have to give him a large salary [from $25,000 downward] or he would leave us and take the first "CALL" that was more golden than ours.

I. I thought so. Ministers are not such fools as to follow the example, or obey the teachings of Jesus or Paul. I conclude as before, and note the progress of infidelity. Not only are James and Peter rejected, but also Jesus and Paul.

B. The justness of your conclusions confound me. How blind I have been, and yet I talked of living in a gospel blaze. Sir, proceed with your objections, although I am hopeless as to removing them.

I. I think Jesus said the gospel was to be preached in all the world, to every creature, and signs shall follow them that believe; they shall cast out devils, and lay hands on the sick, and heal them. Sir, you have known many believers, have you ever seen or heard of "these signs" following them? [Mark 16: 16, 18.]

B. No, sir; I never have.

I. I am forced to conclude, therefore, that either Jesus has broken his promise, or that all your believers are not true believers.

B. Oh! sir, let Jesus be true, and all such believers liars.

I. Very well, I accept your conclusion; but in what a pretty predicament does it place the christian world with all its prayers and piety—all its missionary

crossings of sea and land, to make proselytes! They are *the true infidels*! Ha, ha, ha! !

B. Sir, I am almost speechless: your arguments shatter all my pious hopes and pretensions. I feel poor, and blind, and naked. Perchance God will by some means restore the ancient gospel for the consolation of those in a condition like mine.

I. It is far from my wish to distress or pain your mind, *but if I cannot have the real gospel*, I will not allow myself to be imposed upon by a mere sham, spurious, *counterfeit gospel*. Infidel as I am, I have often admired the church, whose unity, order, laws, officers, and blessings, I read described in the New Testament; but as for the rickety, divided thing called christianity, seen in these days, I loathe, I despise it from my very soul. I might be disposed to entertain the real gospel, but a counterfeit never! Shall I state my further objections?

B. Yes, sir, freely; though their truth thrills my mind with pain.

I. Jesus says, I think, somewhere, that he would send a "spirit to guide" his people into all truth, and "show them things to come." Have you ever seen any one so guided, and so shown things to come? [John, 16: 13.]

B. No; all modern divines are guided by the writings and sermons of hoary and time honored fathers, the commentaries of learned doctors, and the doctrinal decisions of synods, assemblies, catechisms, articles, creeds, etc.

I. So the spirit guide is, like other "unnecessary" things, "done away!" Have you ever known any one that was "shown things to come," by the spirit Jesus promised?

B. No, sir. Prophets are done away.

I. Thus Jesus promised something *not now* needed! Bravo, modern divinity!—infidelity, I mean. You are therefore without the spirit, "shewer of things to come." What spirit have you got in his stead?

B. I confess I cannot tell. The spirit of Jesus kept the church one; other spirits of some strange kind have torn it into strifes, schisms and divisions innumerable. As you say, we are infidels, with all our pretense to piety.

I. An honest conclusion, and as clear as dialectics can deduce it. Shall I proceed with my objections?

B. What! have you further objections? If so, proceed with them.

I. Paul, I think, talks about four foundation principles in some of his writings: "repentance, faith, baptism, and laying on of hands." This order of Paul was not wise enough for modern doctors: and therefore they mend it into—repentance, faith, *sprinkling*,—no laying on of hands for the Holy Ghost—and your sect, out of these four principles, rejects "baptism for the remission of sins, and laying on of hands for the Holy Ghost." Thus, out of Paul's four principles, modern divines reject two! Is this so? [Heb., 6: 1.]

B. It is as you say. I quite forgot till now, of Peter and John laying on hands and giving the spirit to the Samaritans; Paul laying on hands to give the twelve Ephesian baptized believers; the elders laying on hands; the bestowing a gift to Timothy; and I wonder——

I. Wonder at what? Do you think that college taught doctors would follow the teachings of a wild enthusiast, like Paul—ignorant fishermen, like Peter and

John? No! baptism for remission, and laying on of hands for the spirit, indeed! Such ancient rubbish may be taught by *fishermen apostles*, but by wise and pious modern divines—never! [Acts, 8. 17.]

B. Sir, your remarks are true as they are pungent and caustic. I rack my brain to invent replies to them, but all my efforts are abortive. Proceed, however, with your objections.

I. I understand that in the primitive church the followers of Jesus were called by the spirit and apostles, "saints." Was this so?

B. It was. Oh, happy days! But this name is done away. [Acts, 11: 26.]

I. Do you really fancy that modern pious people would be called saints now? Never! They prefer to be Calvinites, Wesleyites, Popeites, Churchites, Baxterites, Peterites, Paulites, any ites, rather than saints. They admit that Paul condemned these "names of blasphemy," and said, Who is Paul, or Apollos? They might be nothing, but Calvin, Wesley, etc., are persons of paramount importance. Infidel, again, you see Ha, ha. [I. Cor., 3: 3, 4]

B. I confess this is so; but I never saw this matter so plainly before. We may, I find, learn even from an infidel. Proceed, however, with your objections, if any further remain.

I. In the apostolic church, I think, elders were made overseers by the Holy Ghost. Is this so? [Acts, 13. 1, 4.]

B. Yes; would it were so again.

I. Vain man. Do you think modern pious people would leave the Holy Ghost to choose weak and foolish things of fishermen again? Never; they have itching ears, and will heap up teachers that will tickle well—the better the tickler, the better the pay; and you know that to support these ticklers, merchandise is made of the bodies and souls of men; aye, of the chapels, too! Paul suspected that modern pietists would not have elders of the Holy Ghost's choosing. No, indeed; and to climax this ticklish subject, large colleges and institutions are built, and learned teachers supported to furnish a supply of first-rate ticklers! Ha, ha, ha, Paul, infidelity prevails against you! [Acts, 13: 3, 4. Heb., 5: 4.]

B. Oh, sir, you fill me with the keenest grief. Surely I have been blind, and led by the blind. My piety I perceive to have been light and evanescent as vanity. Any further objections? [1st Cor., 12th, 13th and 14th chaps.]

I. Saints used to have visions, tongues, dreams, prophecies, healings, etc., modern divines, I am told, reject all these silly whimsies. Is it so? [Eph., 4: 8 to 14.]

B. Yes, they do; infidels that they are.

I. Why, my friend, I have almost converted you to infidelity: of course modern piety would reject such childish things as visions, etc.; they might be necessary for infants, but not by full grown modern pious people and divines. The mass is infidel.

B. It is a marvel to me how I could have overlooked that, which, while you remark, appears so transparent and plain; but truth is potent, even though it comes from the mouth of an infidel. Proceed, if you please.

I. Paul, I think, said, covet earnestly spiritual gifts, tongues, prophecy, healings, etc. I think our divines forbid to speak in tongues, and say prophecy is not needed—they are "done away." Is this the case? [1st Cor., 14: 1.]

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B. It is so; although Paul said we were to "know in part, and prophesy in part," *until "that which is true is come,"* etc. [Chap. 13.]

I. So modern divines reject prophecy in whole and part, because *perfection* has come—even the most *perfect confusion!* I should like to see a body made up of all the jarring "bodies" of modern sectarians. Methinks it would be an image *kicking all manner of ways*, and would soon *kick itself to pieces again*. Bravo, infidelity.

B. It is with poignant grief I admit the correctness of your rigorous and burning predicates, but after all, I have one consolation; and it arise from this consideration: that your animadversions, scathing as they are, leave the church of early saints untouched. Oh! that the ancient church, with its glorious spirit, apostles, unity, laws and blessings for body and soul were restored.

I. I feel almost inclined to add, Amen! Do you think it will ever be!

B. I hardly venture to hope.

I. I am not surprised at your want of even hope. Shall I tell why?

B. Yes, if you please.

I. Then prepare your mind for remarks more startling than you have heard yet. To all the infidelity previously stated, modern pious divines have capped a climax; they do not even worship the God of Abraham.

B. Sir, you perfectly astound me! Not worship the God of Abraham? Why, if you can show this, you will prove us to be, not only infidels, but idolaters!

I. Then listen. The several leading sects, I think, say, "the God they worship has neither body, parts, or passions." Am I correct? [See 39 Articles, Church of England; Prayer Book; and Methodist Discipline, Art. 1.]

B. Perfectly so, according to the first article of the church of England, to which the sects subscribe fully.

I. Old Moses, who, it is said, was very intimate with God, says, I think, in Gen., xviii., that God appeared to Abraham, and that old Abraham provided water to wash his *feet*—feet without a body? Also, that Abraham and Sarah provided a feast, and Jehovah and the two angels with him *did eat*—eat without a body?

B. Sir, Jehovah only appeared in a figure.

I. O, indeed! Then it was only a *figurative* Abraham, a figurative calf and cakes, and a figurative Sarah—the whole book of Genesis is only a figure, and a fable; Adam is only a figure, and the fall a fable! Infidelity triumphant! [Gen., 18: 1 to 16.]

B. Oh! no, no; it must have been a real Jehovah—real feet—and real eating—real old Abraham and Sarah—a real Adam—and, to our sorrow, a real fall.

I. Then my conclusion is resistless—that modern sects do not worship the Jehovah of Abraham, who has feet, and could eat and drink. Old Moses and Abraham might be such fools, but modern divines never will—they are *too wise*, and *more infidel than I*, for I think I could love a God so kind, so condescending as thus to walk, to talk, to eat and drink with his friends, Abraham and Moses.

B. I am almost struck dumb with astonishment; but is it not said that God is a spirit? Has a spirit a body? [Heb., 1:3. Gen., 1:26, 27. James, 3:9.]

I. Are you a spirit?

B. Yes; and have a body, too. O! now I seem to understand glorious old

Moses, when he says man was made "in the *image* of God"—body and spirit.

I. Moses also states that he had talked with God "face to face," (face without a body?) but he wanted to see the face of God in his unshaded glory. God says no man could see his face (in its glory) and live; but he added, I will put thee in this cleft in the rock, and as my glory passes by, I will cover thee (thine eyes) with my hand, and when I pass by, thou shalt see my *back parts*. Modern pious people and divines say their God has no parts; thus they worship—nothing! They are atheists—too wise and learned are they to worship the God of Moses! [Exod., 33: 18 to 23.]

B. Sir, my senses seem as if steeped in stupefaction; you utterly bewilder me.

I. Jesus, I think, says his Father has a voice and shape. Paul says, man is not to worship with his head covered, because he was made in the shape of God. God the Father has a person, and Jesus was the express image of it. The God of Jesus and Paul might have a shape and person, but modern divines are too pious and atheistic to worship such a God! [John, 5:37. 1st. Cor., 11:7]

B. Your premises are drawn, I must confess, from the plain word of scripture. I see no way of escape from this scathing conclusion.

I. The God that modern pious people and divines worship, they say, has no passions. Is love a passion? Then God so *loved* the world, etc. Is jealousy a passion? Then Moses says Jehovah is a *jealous* God. Is wrath a passion? Then God swear in his *wrath* that the rebel Israelites should not enter Canaan. Am I correct in my quotations?

B. Perfectly so. Sir, you have, in this astounding conversation, brought strange things to my ears. I never heard a man quote scripture more correctly, and draw deductions more natural and clear. You must have studied the scriptures closely.

I. If there is any clearness in my arguments drawn from the scriptures, the credit is entirely due, not to my ingenuity or ability, but to the conversation of an intelligent friend, who has been for some time joined to a strange people, called Latter Day Saints, whose doctrines I have been stating to you. Have you ever heard of them?

B. Oh! I have heard of a man receiving golden plates from an angel, on which the gospel was graven, but it is too marvelous for me.

I. Too marvelous! not half so marvelous as God's writing with his finger on the plates of stone, and giving them to Moses.

B. Well; so it is—much more marvelous. I did not think of those plates of stone.

I. Can you inform me what became of those stone plates?

B. I suppose, after copies of the law had been multiplied, God took the stone plates to heaven, or caused them to be hid up that they might be preserved.

I. And so the Latter Day Saints say about the Golden Plates—a striking coincidence!

B. Can you inform me where I can learn more about these Latter Day Saints?

I. I am sorry I cannot; but my intelligent friend will, I know, feel great pleasure in doing so. I will take an opportunity to introduce you to him.

B. Many thanks to you. How strange

our meeting, and still more strange that you, an infidel, should have so completely demolished all my pious pretensions. I long for the time to come when I shall hear from your friend of these strange Latter Day Saints.

I. Then it would appear you shall not have long to wait, for here he comes. Allow me to introduce you, Mr. Latter Day Saint, to my friend of the Baptist persuasion, who is anxious to know something of the rise and doctrine of the church of Latter Day Saints.

L. D. S. I shall feel great pleasure in taking your friend to where he shall receive the fullest information as to the rise and doctrines of the church of Latter Day Saints. Our maxims are, "Prove all things," "Search the Scriptures." Sir, *(turning to the Baptist,)* you inquire the rise of the Church of Latter Day Saints? It owes its origin, like all true churches, to revelation from God, whose august principles are those held by patriarchs, prophets and apostles—ancient as eternity, immutable as God; principles worthy of Jehovah, consolatory to man, and conformable to scripture and reason.

B. I feel already prepossessed in your favor. The conversation I have just held with your infidel friend, has compelled me to acknowledge that modern christianity, with its multiplied divisions, sects and doctrines, is altogether unlike the primitive church described in the New Testament. In fact, he has obliged me to admit, that modern christianity is *atheistic, infidelity disguised*; a church without ancient gifts, like a body without members, mutilated and disfigured! I must abandon the unnatural caricature, but whither shall I fly? I feel the Bible is true. the seal of the eternal is upon it. I have heard without satisfaction of all the sects. O, that I knew where I could hear of the God of Abraham, and the ancient Gospel of Peter and Paul preached, and see the ancient ordinances administered in their simplicity and power.

L. D. S. And can you nowhere on earth find, as you say, the God of Abraham worshiped, the ancient gospel preached, and ancient ordinances administered? Then it is high time that God in his mercy should reveal himself, and restore the ancient gospel, with its powers, gifts, and blessings.

B. Yes, it would be indeed merciful and kind. I have often thought how it could be done. But if some preacher of talent and influence were to preach the ancient gospel, and administer its ordinances, it would be only raising another sect. All would be in vain, unless some man received authority, commission, and revelation from God to preach and administer like Paul. Oh, that such a man were raised up.

L. D. S. I have to inform you that just such a man was Joseph Smith, and just such authority, commission, and power did he receive; and just such a gospel as Peter and Paul preached did he preach; and just such ordinances did he administer; and just such signs follow; and just such persecutions and slander, as pursued early Saints, have pursued the Church of Latter Day Saints. Joseph, the Prophet of the Lord, like other prophets, finished his course and kept the faith. Modern preachers cried, impostor! dolusion! and, like dogs of hell, panted for and shed his blood! To you, as an honest inquirer, I say as Phillip said to Nathaniel, Come and see; faith comes by hearing. The Spirit says,

Come; the bride says, Come; hear and obey, and your crushed spirit, your disquieted and distressed heart shall know a peace deep and enduring as the throne of God.

B. Thank you for your invitation. I will come and hear, for saith Solomon, He that judgeth a thing before he heareth it, is not wise. Farewell.

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